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Declassified Case: NW#78134 Date:
08-25-2025

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President
Vladimir Putin of Russia

PARTICIPANTS: President Putin

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

Notetakers: Diana Schmidt, Todd Whatley, and
Danielle Lukich

DATE, TIME May 28, 2007, 07:41-07:59 a.m. EDT

AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello. (U)

President Putin: Hello, George. (U)

The President: Thank you, thanks for calling. (U)

President Putin: Thank you for finding time to talk. (U)

The President: Anytime. (U)

President Putin: First of all I'd like to congratulate you on Memorial Day. I see how Americans cherish the lives of those who died for their motherland. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Putin: I'd like to discuss briefly a question discussed during Condi's visit. We practically dedicated the visit to the Kosovo problem. I'm sure Condi informed you of the way the discussion was developing, but still I have some personal things to share with you. (U)

I would like you, George, to understand us correctly. Condi, on behalf of the European Union and the State Department, talked about Kosovo as a unique situation. But for us, it is quite obvious Kosovo doesn't present a unique situation, especially in terms of the situation that now exists in the former

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Declassify on: 6/4/17

NW#: 78134 DocId: 34685375

Soviet Union after the disintegration of the former USSR. In one case, there was disintegration of one communist empire -- Yugoslavia -- and in the other case, the disintegration of another communist empire, the Soviet Union. In one case, we witnessed ethnic cleansing and in the other case the same. In both cases, there were ethnic-based crimes. In fact, we all know that Kosovo is independent already. But South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Transnistria are similar and demonstrate even more independence. They have their own constitutions and parliaments and presidents. (S)

For us, it is quite evident that Kosovo has created an objective precedent in the former Soviet space, Europe, and the Balkans. That is why I believe if we use in one case the principle of self determination, then we should apply the same principle in all situations, then we can cut all knots at one time. We wouldn't want to catch fish in these murky waters of conflicts looking to get some unknown advantages. (S)

But what I believe is more important is that stability is based on the fundamental principle of international law which is territorial integrity of the individual state. We should either follow this principle of a universal nature or follow the principle of self-determination. (S)

We believe we should continue negotiations in New York and provide more time for negotiations, perhaps take a one-year time out. The Serbs are willing to join the European Union and NATO. Sooner or later they will transform their position on Kosovo, but let them determine their position by themselves without any determination from the outside. (S)

One other consideration, George, regarding an issue closely related to Russia. I know, George, how you cherish the presidential duties, how you love America, and I believe that you have no doubt that I feel the same about my country. If they pass this Kosovo resolution without doing the same for South Ossetia and Abkhazia, I risk a second Chechnya because the people in the north Caucasus, especially the Ossetians, will never agree to this position and will take up arms. I'm risking here a second Chechnya. You understand what this will mean for Russia. (S)

So I would like you to take into account all these things regarding Russia. I'm looking forward to talking about all these things in Kennebunkport on July 1-2. I thank you for your invitation to Kennebunkport. (S)

I noted your recent interview in the press with Reuters. You spoke of the importance of the rule of law, and I believe this is right. But if we apply this to Russia, then we also have to apply it to other international issues. So once again, I'm looking forward to discussing this in an honest, open, candid, and friendly manner. (S)

The President: Vladimir, a couple of points. (U)

First, we will see each other at the G-8, of course. I'm really looking forward to you coming to my dad's house in Maine. He is excited to have you there. It will be a relaxed environment where we can continue to discuss this important issue. (S)

I feel like this phone call represents the relationship we have established where you can share with me your concerns in a candid manner. Frankly, it's going to be an important example for future presidents of our respective countries to show how to deal with complex issues. (S)

I'm always asked about you, and I tell people you are a strong leader; you care deeply about Russia. Of course, I also add I'd like to have some of your popularity points -- you need to loan me a few. (S)

As for Kosovo, it is a very complex issue where over time peoples' attitudes have become fairly set, including mine. We view this as a unique situation -- a unique outcome of the Balkan wars. We are deeply worried about expectations and civil strife. We also need a rational way forward for Serbia in regards to the European Union. I don't know if we will reach common ground, but we should try. My ambassador is ready to talk with your ambassador about potential measures. Our U.N. Ambassador and yours should discuss changes. Condi is coming to the G-8 ministerial and would like to sit down with Lavrov, if possible. Whatever happens, I think we should try to reach an accommodation on a U.N. Security Council Resolution. We think it should happen soon. Listen, this world is full of all kinds of complex issues, and I hope we can reach agreement on this one just like we have on nonproliferation, terrorism, and Iran. I will certainly pass on your concerns and your explanation of your concerns to Condi and Zal, so if your people are interested in sitting down with them, they have your views in mind. They will have your perspective and mine. (S)

(So I appreciate your call a lot. I thought it was very constructive. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Germany.
(U)

President Putin: There is one more small question. You mentioned the problem of climate change, and you hinted at the position of the U.S. The U.S. has its own vision. In our discussion with the European Union, I mentioned to Merkel that Russia has joined Kyoto. But those conditions under which Russia joined Kyoto, we don't see them as fair. I believe we should look for an option which will embrace all countries, including the U.S., China, Brazil, and India. Our Sherpas while discussing this problem were quite close to the U.S. position. I hope our discussion of this problem will be quite positive and will lead to a solution. (S)

The President: Thanks. I look forward to seeing you. Are you bringing Lyudmila to Maine? (U)

President Putin: (Response unclear) (U)

The President: She is or not? (U)

(President Putin: No, she is not. (U)

The President: Don't worry about it, we will have a boys dinner. (U)

President Putin: Okay. (U)

The President: Alright. Thanks, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: All the best. (U)

The President: Bye bye. (U)

--End of Conversation--